BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

UBC

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2008AE0031-000785
May 20, 2008

Ministry of Advanced Education
University of British Columbia

RECORD NUMBER OF DOCTORS GRADUATE IN B.C.

VANCOUVER – The first students to earn their MDs as part of a groundbreaking expansion of medical education in B.C. will graduate tomorrow from the University of British Columbia's faculty of medicine – the largest class of doctors in the province's history.

"I congratulate all 195 of this year's graduating MDs, whose accomplishments also mark a milestone for British Columbia and for UBC's faculty of medicine in educating more doctors to meet patients' needs," said Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell. "Between 1991 and 2001, not a single seat was added to medical education in B.C. We have succeeded in dramatically expanding the program, and in educating doctors in the North and on Vancouver Island for the first time to help address shortages in those regions."

In 2002, government announced expansion plans for UBC's faculty of medicine and an investment of $134 million to build the facilities to accommodate new training spaces. At that time, the faculty graduated 128 MDs a year.

The expansion was launched in 2004 in collaboration with the University of Northern British Columbia, the University of Victoria and B.C.'s health authorities. Delivered at UBC's Vancouver campus as well as at UNBC and UVic, the program is the first four-year "distributed" system for medical education in North America.

"Thanks to our partners, hundreds of health-care professionals, and welcoming communities around the province, we are providing more local education and training opportunities for our medical students and helping to improve access to care for more British Columbians," said Dr. Gavin Stuart, dean of the UBC faculty of medicine.

The expanded program accepts 256 new students each year (32 at the Island medical program based at UVic, 32 at the northern medical program based at UNBC, and 192 at the Vancouver Fraser medical program based at UBC Vancouver). Medical education and training for students is also provided at more than 80 hospital and clinical sites around B.C., involving hundreds of clinical teachers who balance their own medical practices with student training.

"Doubling the number of undergraduate medical school spaces in British Columbia is part of our commitment to improving access to quality health care throughout the province," said Health Minister George Abbott. "Congratulations to the class of 2008, and we look forward to working with you to provide world-class health care to British Columbians all across the Province for decades to come."

-more-

With the expansion of UBC's faculty of medicine, there are now 97 family practice residencies available across 11 hospital sites in the province, and 144 spaces for doctors training in other specialities, up from a total of 128 positions in 2003. Depending on their chosen specialty, medical grads will take between two and seven years of training in postgraduate residencies to qualify for licensing as doctors.

-30-

Media contact:

Linda O'Connor
Communications Manager
Ministry of Advanced Education
250 952-6400
250 812-4418 (cell)

Alison Liversage
Manager, Communications, Faculty of Medicine
University of British Columbia
604 827-3301

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.